



COUNTY OF MENDOCINO
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
340 LAKE MENDOCINO DRIVE
UKIAH, CALIFORNIA 95482-9432
VOICE (707) 463-4363 FAX (707) 463-5474

January 28, 2026

SECTION 4(f) DE MINIMIS EVALUATION

Briceland Road Bridge Replacement Project (CR 435, PM 0.63) Bridge No. 10C-0181
Mendocino County, California Federal-Aid Project No. BRLO-5910(085)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Section 4(f) De Minimis Evaluation has been prepared to assess whether the proposed Briceland Road Bridge Replacement Project (Project) would result in a de minimis impact on publicly owned land of Sinkyone Wilderness State Park (SWSP), a resource protected under Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 U.S.C. §303; 23 U.S.C. §138).

The Project would require limited permanent right-of-way (ROW) acquisition and temporary construction easements (TCEs) from land owned and managed by California State Parks. The affected parcel lies within the Mattole River Corridor planning unit of SWSP. No public recreational facilities, access points, or programmed recreational uses occur within or adjacent to the Project limits.

This evaluation is intended to support a request for a de minimis impact concurrence from California State Parks and approval by Caltrans, acting as the NEPA Lead Agency under the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) NEPA Assignment Program.

2.0 GENERAL BACKGROUND

Mendocino County Department of Transportation (County), in cooperation with Caltrans and FHWA, proposes to replace the existing Briceland Road Bridge over the Mattole River. The existing structure consists of a single-span bridge constructed from railroad flatcars supported on concrete abutments. The bridge has been identified as structurally deficient and functionally obsolete and does not meet current design or safety standards.

The Project is located in a remote, rural portion of northwestern Mendocino County near the Mendocino–Humboldt County line. Surrounding land uses are predominantly natural and undeveloped, with the roadway corridor providing the only public access through the Mattole River Corridor portion of SWSP.

3.0 SECTION 4(f) REGULATORY BACKGROUND

Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act establishes a national policy to preserve publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites. Approval of a transportation project that uses Section 4(f) property may occur only if there is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternative, or if the use results in a de minimis impact.

Amendments enacted under Section 6009 of SAFETEA-LU allow transportation projects with de minimis impacts on Section 4(f) properties to proceed without the preparation of a Section 4(f) feasible and prudent alternatives analysis, provided that the project does not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes that qualify the property for protection, and that public review requirements and written concurrence from the Official with Jurisdiction are satisfied. FHWA's implementing regulations for Section 4(f) are codified at 23 CFR Part 774.

Pursuant to 23 U.S.C. §327 and the NEPA Assignment Memorandum of Understanding between FHWA and Caltrans, Caltrans has assumed FHWA's responsibilities for NEPA compliance, including Section 4(f) determinations, for this Project.

4.0 PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the Project is to improve public safety and maintain reliable access along Briceland Road by replacing an aging bridge that no longer meets current structural, hydraulic, or safety standards. The Project is needed to:

- Replace a structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridge;
- Improve hydraulic capacity and reduce scour risk;
- Provide safe, all-season access for residents, emergency services, and fire response;
- Reduce long-term maintenance requirements.

5.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed Project consists of replacing the existing bridge with a single-span, cast-in-place, post-tensioned concrete box girder bridge on approximately the existing alignment. Key elements include:

- An approximately 81-foot clear-span bridge with no piers in the channel;
- Two travel lanes meeting current County and emergency access standards;
- Minor roadway approach reconstruction to improve vertical profile and hydraulics;
- Construction of a temporary upstream detour utilizing a decommissioned forest road;
- Installation of drainage features, including three bioretention basins.

All grading and construction activities would be confined to the existing transportation corridor, proposed ROW acquisitions, and designated TCEs. Temporary disturbance areas would be restored following construction.

6.0 SECTION 4(f) RESOURCE

The affected Section 4(f) resource is land owned and managed by California State Parks as part of Sinkyone Wilderness State Park. The specific parcel affected by the Project lies within the Mattole River Corridor planning unit, which is designated as a non-wilderness area in the SWSP General Plan (California Department of Parks and Recreation, 2006).

Under the SWSP General Plan, non-wilderness areas are lands excluded from statutory wilderness designation that are intended to accommodate existing roads, access corridors, and other necessary infrastructure while emphasizing protection of natural and scenic resources. Unlike designated wilderness areas, non-wilderness areas are not managed to preserve wilderness character and may support administrative and transportation uses. Consistent with this framework, the Mattole River Corridor within the Project area functions as a non-wilderness planning unit that accommodates the existing Briceland Road corridor and is not managed for public recreation. The corridor contains no developed recreational facilities, trails, campsites, parking areas, or designated access points, and public use within the Project limits is limited to passive scenic viewing by motorists traveling along Briceland Road.

The Project requires limited permanent ROW acquisition from State Parks land to accommodate the bridge footprint, roadway prism, and drainage features. Based on the approved ROW exhibits dated November 27, 2023, approximately 0.44 acre of State Parks land would be permanently acquired.

Temporary construction easements totaling approximately 18,545 square feet are required to provide workspace for construction activities, equipment access, staging, and temporary detour bridge. All areas subject to temporary easements would be restored to pre-project conditions following construction.

To maintain traffic along Briceland Road during construction, a temporary detour bridge will be constructed adjacent to the existing bridge and removed following completion of the replacement bridge. The detour bridge will utilize a previously disturbed, decommissioned forest road and will be in place for the duration of construction only. The detour will not result in permanent incorporation of parkland, and all temporarily occupied areas will be fully restored upon completion of construction. The temporary detour bridge will maintain existing roadway access for the traveling public and will not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes of Sinkyone Wilderness State Park.

Based on the absence of recreational activities, features, or attributes within the Project footprint, the affected portion of State Parks land does not function as a public park or recreation area for purposes of Section 4(f).

7.0 AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION MEASURES

The Project incorporates avoidance and minimization measures developed through coordination with State Parks, resource agencies, and engineering disciplines, including:

- Selection of a single-span bridge to avoid in-channel piers;
- Placement of abutments outside the active channel;

- Minimization of vegetation removal, particularly in riparian areas;
- Limitation of permanent ROW acquisition to the minimum necessary;
- Restoration and revegetation of all temporarily disturbed areas.

Given the constrained roadway corridor and surrounding steep terrain, avoidance of State Parks land is not feasible without introducing greater environmental and engineering impacts.

8.0 EFFECTS ON ACTIVITIES, FEATURES, AND ATTRIBUTES

The affected State Parks land contains no recreational activities, facilities, or features. The Project would not:

- Impair recreational activities (none occur);
- Remove or alter features supporting recreation;
- Diminish scenic, cultural, or interpretive attributes;
- Change the functional character or management objectives of the parkland.

Temporary construction effects, such as noise, equipment presence, and vegetation disturbance within TCEs, would be short-term and confined to a non-recreational transportation corridor. These effects would not adversely affect any activities, features, or attributes qualifying the property for Section 4(f) protection.

9.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Consistent with 23 CFR 774.5(b)(2), a 30-day public review period will be conducted for this Section 4(f) De Minimis Impact Evaluation. The review will be implemented by Mendocino County on behalf of Caltrans and will be properly noticed in accordance with Caltrans Local Assistance procedures. Any comments received related to Section 4(f) will be forwarded to Caltrans for consideration prior to final approval.

10.0 DE MINIMIS IMPACT DETERMINATION

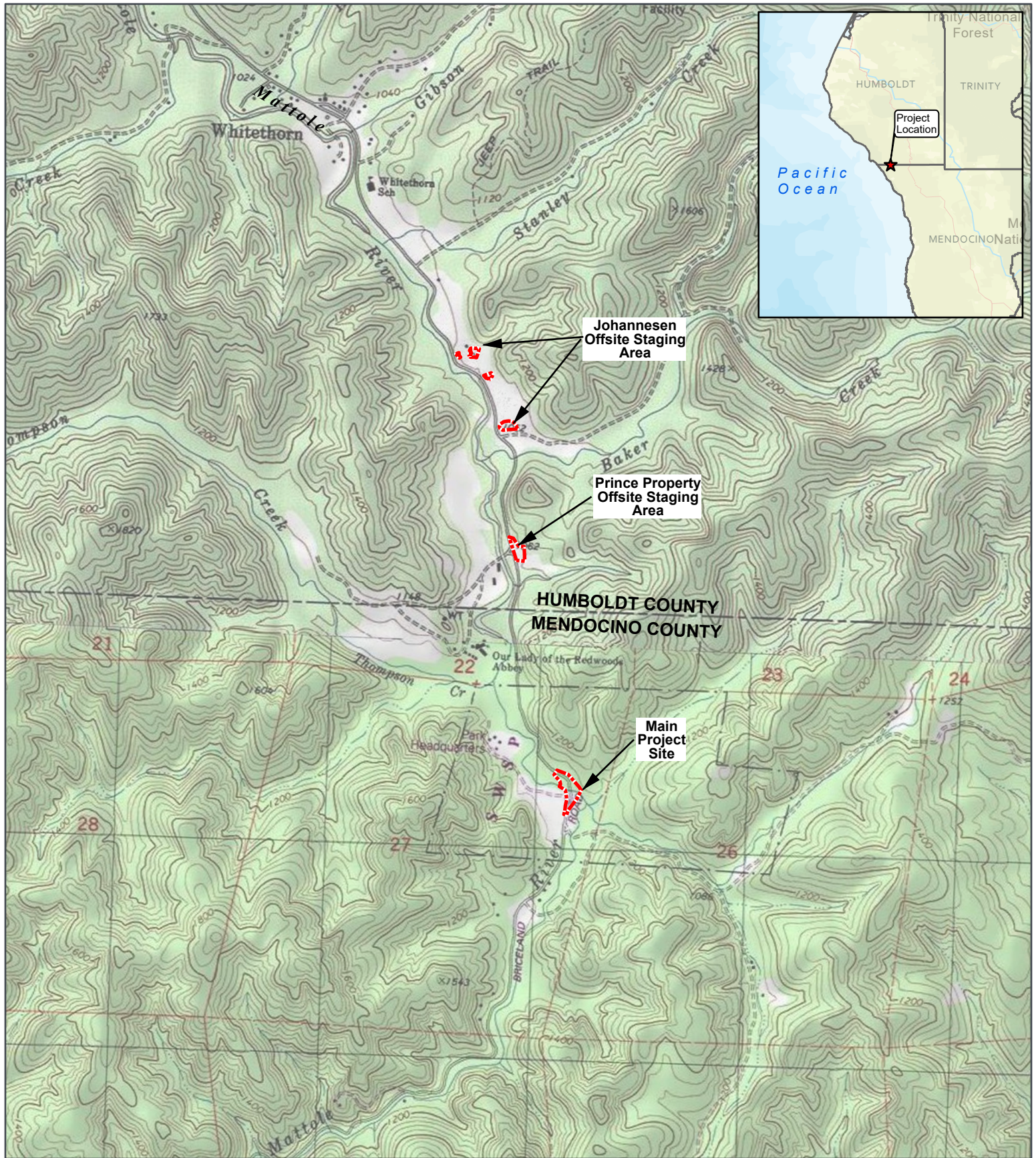
Based on the analysis presented herein, the following determinations were made in accordance with Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act and its implementing regulations at 23 CFR §774.5(b):

- The Project requires limited permanent and temporary use of State Parks land.
- The affected parcel is a non-recreational corridor with no public access or park amenities.
- The Project avoids and minimizes use of State Parks land to the maximum extent feasible.
- The Project would not adversely affect a publicly owned park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge, including the activities, features, or attributes qualifying the property for protection under Section 4(f). Project-related impacts on Sinkyone Wilderness State Park would be temporary in nature and de minimis.

Accordingly, the proposed Project qualifies for a de minimis impact determination pursuant to Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act and 23 CFR 774.5(b). Final approval is contingent upon written concurrence from California State Parks and approval by Caltrans in its role as NEPA Lead Agency.

11.0 ATTACHMENTS

- Project Vicinity Map
- Project Layout Map

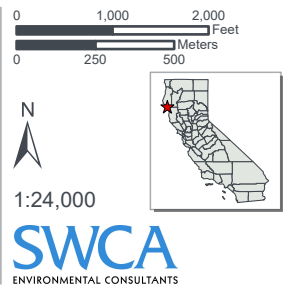


BRICELAND THORN ROAD
OVER MATTOLE RIVER
BRIDGE (10C-0181)
REPLACEMENT PROJECT

 Project Location

Project Vicinity Map

Mendocino County and Humboldt
County, CA
USGS 7.5' Quadrangle:
Briceland, CA (1969) &
Bear Harbor, CA (1969)
T05S, R02E
Sections 22, 26 & 27
NAD 1983 California Teale Albers
FUTS
40.0025°N 123.928°W
Base Map: ESRI ArcGIS Online,
accessed March 2022
Updated: 3/4/2022
Project No. 66457
Aprx:
66457_bricelandRdOverMattoleRvrBrdg
Layout:
457BricelandRdBrdg_Fig1LocationMap

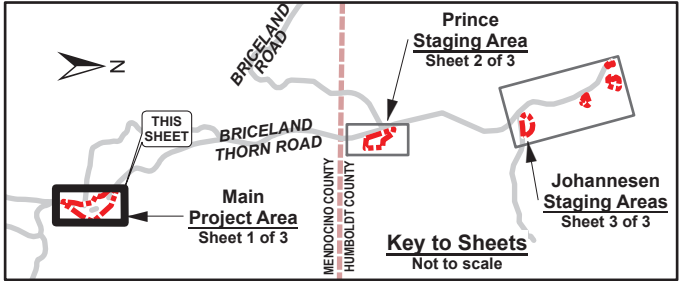




BRICELAND THORN ROAD OVER
MATTOLE RIVER BRIDGE (10C-0181)
REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Proposed Project Map

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">Action AreaMattole RiverChannel 1WetlandDouglas-fir Forest (DFF) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Disturbed Area / RoadsProposed Road and Bridge ImprovementsLimits of GradingProposed Culverts / Drainage Improvements | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Proposed BioswaleRock Slope Protection (RSP)Temporary DetourProposed Right-of-wayTemporary Construction Easement (TCE) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">ESA Fencing/Signage (ESA)Existing Right-of-wayPermanent ImpactTemporary Impact |
|--|--|--|---|



Mendocino County, CA
NAD 1983 StatePlane California II
FIPS 0402 Feet
39.9936°N 123.9247°W
Proposed Layout: bb-101498 Proposed
02-17-2022.dwg (23 Feb 2022)
Topo Basemap: 6455 Topo.dwg (18 Jan
2013) by Wildan Engineering
Aerial Photograph: 22 April 2019,
Google Earth Imagery

Base Map: World Clarity Imagery,
ESRI ArcGIS Online, accessed February 2024
Updated: 2/26/2024
Project No. 66457
Layout:
66457BricelandRdBrdg_Fig3ProposedImpacts
Aprx: 66457_bricelandRdOverMattoleRvrBrdg

0 25 50 Feet
0 7.5 15 Meters

1:600

SWCA
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS